

BENCH-BAR-MEDIA CONFERENCE

MINUTES OF JANUARY 15, 1998 MEETING

The Bench-Bar-Media Conference convened on January 15, 1998 in Kent and New Castle Counties simultaneously at 1:00 p.m.

The meeting was open to the public. Present were:

Members from the Bench

Justice Randy Holland

Judge Henry duPont Ridgely

Members from the Bar

Richard Kirk, Vice Chair

Eugene Bayard

Howard Handelman (in New Castle County)

Members from the Print Media

James Flood

Michael Pelrine, Delaware State News

Rita Farrell (in New Castle County)

Jane Amari (in New Castle County)

Members from the Electronic Media

Michael Sigman, Chair

Allen Loudell

Marilyn Buerkle

William D. Osborne

Todd Halliday (in New Castle County)

The meeting followed the attached agenda (distributed and posted beforehand).

1. Presentation by Department of Justice

Attorney General Jane Brady, Deputy Attorney General Tim Barron, and State Investigator Edward Hazewski made a presentation to the Conference dealing with crimes of exploitation against the infirm, especially the elderly. Recent cases involving infirm victims have received publicity that have led to the publication of victims' names and residences. The Department of Justice fears that if victims' names and addresses are publicized the victims may be subjected to further exploitation. In some instances, if publicity is a possibility, victims may even choose not to cooperate for fear of such further exploitation.

The Attorney General wants to begin a dialogue with the media, beginning at the Conference, about the development of a voluntary policy of not identifying infirm victims of crimes of exploitation. The Chairman and other members of the media reminded the Attorney General that the Conference is not a policy-making body but is just a forum for discussion. Members of the Conference

brought several concerns about such a policy to the Attorney General's attention.

2. Internet Seminar

Dick Kirk distributed the attached outline for a one day seminar on the Internet to be held on Friday, April 24, 1997. Because of hotel and conference facility shortages, the conference itself will be held in auditorium of the State Office Building. Lunch will be at the Hotel duPont, several blocks away. Several members of the Conference volunteered to assist in the presentations.

3. Media Coverage of High Profile Cases

Mike Sigman asked to defer extended discussion of several recent high profile cases. Mike had had a recent discussion with Superior Court administrator Tom Ralston about other subjects. Tom said he would like to meet with the existing media advisory group to discuss various issues of mutual concern.

4. Old Business

There was no old business remaining from any prior session.

5. New Business

Bud Handelman informed the Conference that a Court Planning Committee, chaired by Judge Bifferato, dealing with the Justice Center, wants input from the various media as to issues of concern to them. Rita Farrell and Todd Halliday volunteered to contact Judge Bifferato to set up a convenient time to discuss those issues.

6. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on March 19, 1998, unless planning for the Internet Seminar requires an earlier meeting, in which case the Chairman will notify everyone. Once again, video conferencing will be available from the Grand Jury room in New Castle County, and the Judges' Chambers in the Kent County Courthouse and the Sussex County Courthouse.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:20 p.m.